

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of processing a plurality of session initiation  
5 dialogs, each session initiation dialog including a respective  
initial message sent by a source of the session initiation dialog,  
each initial message including a well-known port identifier used  
to identify the recipient of the message, the method comprising:  
receiving the initial message for each of the session  
10 initiation dialogs at a dispatcher;  
at the dispatcher, upon receiving the initial message for  
each of the session initiation dialogs, (1) selecting one of a  
plurality of processors to conduct the respective session  
initiation dialog, and (2) forwarding the initial message to the  
15 selected processor; and  
at each of the processors, upon receiving the initial  
message of one of the session initiation dialogs from the  
dispatcher, (1) creating a corresponding response message  
including a port identifier uniquely associated with the processor  
20 to identify a port to which subsequent messages of the session  
initiation dialog are to be directed, and (2) sending the response  
message to the source of the initial message to enable subsequent  
messages of the session initiation dialog to be sent directly to  
the selected processor.  
25
2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising at the  
dispatcher, modifying each initial message to include the port  
identifier associated with the processor selected for that  
message, and wherein forwarding the initial message comprises  
30 forwarding the modified initial message.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the dispatcher and the  
processors are co-located in a single physical system, and wherein

forwarding the initial message comprises sending the initial message through a switch fabric in the system.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the dispatcher and the processors are located in separate physical systems, and wherein forwarding the initial message comprises sending the initial message across a local area network (LAN) interconnecting the separate physical systems.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the session initiation dialogs are conducted according the Session Initiation Protocol.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the session initiation dialogs are conducted according to the Media Gateway Control Protocol.

7. A method according to claim 1, further comprising, at each of the processors, sending information regarding the loading of the processor to the dispatcher, and wherein the dispatcher is operative when selecting a processor to achieve a desired distribution of loading of the processors based on the loading information from the processors.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the dispatcher is operative when selecting a processor for a session initiation dialog to achieve a desired distribution of loading of the processors based on a session size indication contained in the initial message of the session initiation dialog.

9. A media server system for providing media services to at least one application server, the media services employing respective sessions and corresponding session initiation dialogs, each session initiation dialog including a respective initial message

sent by a source of the session initiation dialog, the source being one of the application servers, each initial message including a well-known port identifier used to identify the recipient of the message, the system comprising:

- 5       a dispatcher; and  
      a plurality of processors,  
      the dispatcher being operative to (1) receive the initial message for each of the session initiation dialogs, and (2) upon receiving the initial message for each of the session initiation  
10   dialogs, (i) select one of the processors to conduct the respective session initiation dialog, and (ii) forward the initial message to the selected processor, and  
      each of the processors being operative, upon receiving the initial message of one of the session initiation dialogs from the  
15   dispatcher, to (1) create a corresponding response message including a port identifier uniquely associated with the processor to identify a port to which subsequent messages of the session initiation dialog are to be directed, and (2) send the response message to the application server that was the source of the  
20   initial message to enable subsequent messages of the session initiation dialog to be sent directly to the selected processor.

10. A media server system according to claim 9, wherein the dispatcher is operative to modify each initial message to include  
25   the port identifier associated with the processor selected for that message, and is further operative when forwarding the initial message to forward the modified initial message.

11. A media server system according to claim 9, comprising a  
30   single physical system containing the dispatcher, the processors, and a switch fabric interconnecting the dispatcher and the processors, the switch fabric being operative to carry the initial messages from the dispatcher to the processors.

12. A media server system according to claim 9, comprising separate physical systems containing the dispatcher and the processors respectively, the separate physical systems being interconnected by a local area network (LAN) operative to carry the initial messages from the dispatcher to the processors.

13. A media server system according to claim 9, wherein the session initiation dialogs are conducted according the Session Initiation Protocol.

14. A media server system according to claim 9, wherein the session initiation dialogs are conducted according to the Media Gateway Control Protocol.

15. A media server system according to claim 9, wherein each of the processors is further operative to send information regarding the loading of the processor to the dispatcher, and wherein the dispatcher is further operative when selecting a processor to achieve a desired distribution of loading of the processors based on the loading information from the processors.

16. A media server system according to claim 9, wherein each application server is operative when creating an initial message of a session initiation dialog to include an indication of the size of the session, and wherein the dispatcher is operative when selecting a processor for a session initiation dialog to achieve a desired distribution of loading of the processors based on the session size indication contained in the initial message of the session initiation dialog.